

Schabowski: (~~Looks through his papers...~~) That comes into effect, according to my information, immediately, without delay (~~looking through his papers further~~).

Labs: (~~quietly~~) ...without delay.

Beil: (~~quietly~~) That has to be decided by the Council of Ministers.

Question: (~~...Many voices...~~) You only said the FRG, is the regulation also valid for West Berlin?

Schabowski: (~~reading aloud quickly~~) "As the Press Office of the Ministry ... the Council of Ministers decided that until the *Volkskammer* implements a corresponding law, this transition regulation will be in effect."

Question: Does this also apply for West Berlin? You only mentioned the FRG.

Schabowski: (~~shrugs his shoulders, frowns, looks at his papers~~) So ... (pause), um hmmm (~~reads aloud~~): "Permanent exit can take place via all border crossings from the GDR to the FRG and West Berlin, respectively."

Question: Another question also: ~~does that mean that effective immediately, GDR citizens — Christoph Janowski, Voice of America — does that mean that effective immediately, all GDR citizens cannot emigrate via Czechoslovakia or Poland?~~

Schabowski: No, that is not addressed at all. We hope instead that the movement will (um) regulate itself in this manner, as we are trying to.

Question: (~~many voices, incomprehensible question~~)

Schabowski: I haven't heard anything to the contrary.

Question: (~~many voices, incomprehensible~~)

Schabowski: I haven't heard anything to the contrary.

Question: (~~many voices, incomprehensible~~)

Schabowski: I haven't heard anything to the contrary. I'm expressing myself so carefully because I'm not up to date on this question, but just before I came over here I was given this information. (Several journalists hurry from the room.)

Frage: Mr. Schabowski, what is going to happen to the Berlin Wall now?

Schabowski: It has been brought to my attention that it is 7:00 p.m.. That has to be the last question. Thank you for your understanding.

(um...) What will happen to the Berlin Wall? Information has already been provided in connection with travel activities. (um) The issue of travel, (um) the ability to cross the Wall from our side, ... hasn't been answered yet and exclusively the question in the sense..., so this, I'll put it this way, fortified state border of the GDR.... (um) We have always said that there have to be several other factors (um) taken into consideration. And they deal with the complex of questions that Comrade Krenz, in his talk in the — addressed in view of the relations between the GDR and the FRG, in ditto light of the (um) necessity of continuing the process of assuring peace with new initiatives.

And (um) surely the debate about these questions (um) will be positively influenced if the FRG and NATO also agree to and implement disarmament measures in a similar manner

to that of the GDR and other socialist countries. Thank you very much.

[Source: ~~Author's transcript of television broadcast.~~
Translated for CWIHP by Howard Sargeant.]



DOCUMENT No. 9

Verbal Message from Mikhail Gorbachev to Helmut Kohl, 10 November 1989¹¹³

As you, of course, know, the GDR leadership made the decision to allow the citizens of East Germany unrestricted travel to West Berlin and the FRG. It is understandable, that this decision was not an easy one for the new leadership of the GDR. At the same time, the decision underlines the fact that deep and fundamental changes are taking place in East Germany. The leadership is acting in a concerted and dynamic manner in the interests of its people, and they are opening a dialog with various groups and levels of society.

Statements from the FRG made against this political and psychological background, designed to stimulate a denial of the existence of two German states and encourage emotional reactions, can have no other goal than destabilizing the situation in the GDR and subverting the ongoing processes of democratization and the renewal of all areas of society.

We have received notice that a meeting will take place today in West Berlin, in which official representatives of the FRG and West Berlin will participate. A meeting is planned in the capital of the GDR at the same time.

With the current situation of *de facto* open borders and huge numbers of people moving in both directions, a chaotic situation could easily develop that might have unforeseen consequences.

In light of the time pressure and the seriousness of the situation, I thought it necessary to ask you, in the spirit of openness and realism, to take the extremely pressing steps necessary to prevent a complication and destabilization of the situation.

[Source: SAPMO-BA, DY 30/IV 2/2.039/319. Translated for CWIHP by Howard Sargeant.]